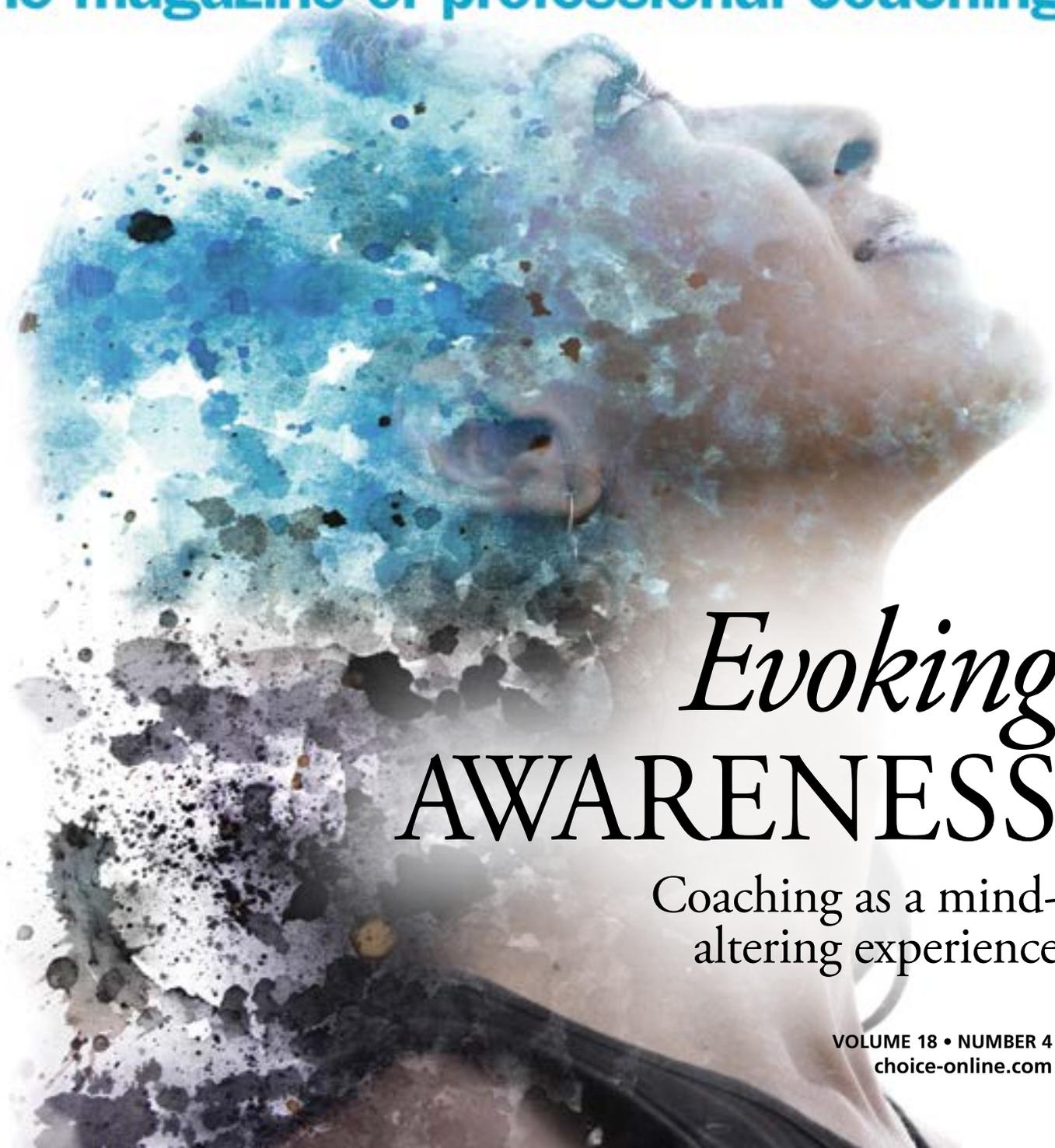


choice

the magazine of professional coaching



Evoking AWARENESS

Coaching as a mind-
altering experience

Evoking **AWARENESS**

Coaching as a mind-altering experience

What does it take to expand and shift your clients' perspective? How does the coach use presence to facilitate the discovery process? What are the mental habits of master coaches? In addition to asking questions, what are the essential practices used in awareness-based coaching? Join us as we explore what elements are needed in a coaching model that goes beyond finding answers to powerfully evoke awareness.

Awareness Intelligence™

Coaching to support learning and change

By Dorothy E. Siminovitch, PhD, MCC

In times of radical disruption, coaches require strong awareness skills to help clients manage change and complexity

Awareness is the act of recognizing data that is emergent and compelling. Awareness catalyses change, is linked to effective leadership, and informs coaching competency. It is core to meditation practices, somatic practices, and team development training. Coaches and their clients benefit from using awareness as vehicle and intervention for learning and change.

Coaching for awareness changes the focus from *horizontal to vertical* development strategies. Horizontal learning is technical training, a transfer of information and techniques that can become obsolete under pressure of accelerated change. Vertical thinking highlights awareness as a way to bypass outdated knowledge and attend to the data of the moment.

Awareness enables us to be “equal to or superior to the complexity of the environment” in which challenges occur. I name this Awareness Intelligence™, acting intentionally upon our immediate awareness data. Awareness Intelligence™ in coaching practice requires awareness management through figure recognition and the capacity to respond to figures with an aware use of self.

FIGURE RECOGNITION

A key aspect of awareness is the “figure-ground” process, i.e., the perceptual identification of a figure of interest in relation to the ground of possibilities. Gestalt theory established that we are primed to pay attention to what we want or need. A figure serves to focus our attention, deepen the meaning we make of it, and mobilize us to take action in response.

Capturing the right figure among

the many that proliferate during times of increased complexity, as well as recognizing a novel figure just emerging, are adaptive challenges. Mindfulness, “the ability to stay present and be aware of what’s happening as it’s happening,” is a way to address and repair disruptions in our patterns of attention and focus. Figure awareness is a vital competency in all effective decision making.

One tool to track how wants and needs are recognized is the Cycle of Experience (COE). The COE identifies a need-fulfillment process across six points: sensation, awareness (figure of interest), energy (emotional investment), action, contact, and closure.

The COE guides coaches to attend to internal and external awarenesses, and to track the ways clients do or do not pay attention to their wants/needs or to the habitual unaware behavioral patterns that interfere with satisfying those figures (understood as “resistance”).



Clients often think they already know and can articulate what they want or need, but can be unaware that their words, body language, or behavior suggest otherwise. For example, a person carries a belief that they “should work hard,” which leads them to ignore sensations of hunger or somatic cues when their workload becomes too heavy.

Two different figures are relevant to the resulting physical exhaustion. One is a figure of self-care, the other is a figure of asking for support, or delegating. The figures are related to the deep-seated “should work hard” that drives the client’s behavior, but they reflect two different needs.

Heightening a client’s awareness can be sensitive, as it requires the coach to offer personal observations and questions designed to facilitate the client’s recognition of what they do want or need rather than should want or need. The coach’s observations and questions may prompt the client’s new awareness of certain patterns in their behavior or expectations that are no longer useful (the outdated “should” in this example).

In an awareness-raising process, it is critical to support the client’s articulation of their figure, awareness of their emotions, and choices about how to move forward (or not) toward satisfying the figure that is wanted, needed, or missing.

If the client shows no energetic “shift” after exploring the figure, the client has not experienced a transformative contact with the figure and no change has occurred.

The closure of the coaching work allows for an assessment of what was or wasn’t accomplished in relation to the figure of interest. In this example, closure serves as the integration of learning in relation to self-support or delegation of work.

Without closure, there may be unfinished business and so less energy available for new figures or other cycles.

FIGURE 1: CYCLE OF EXPERIENCE (COE)

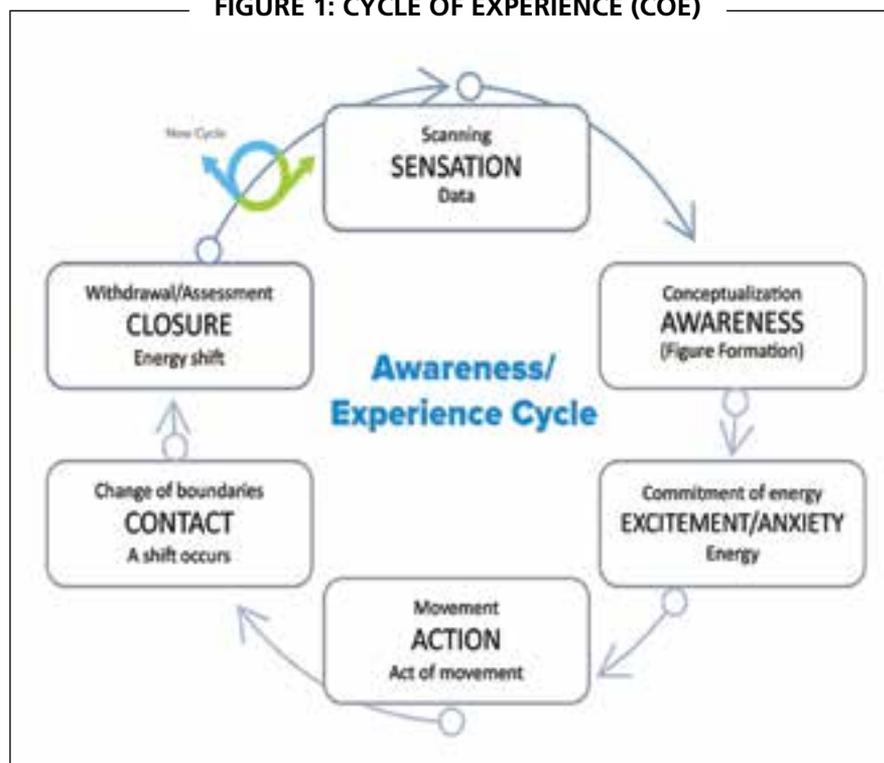
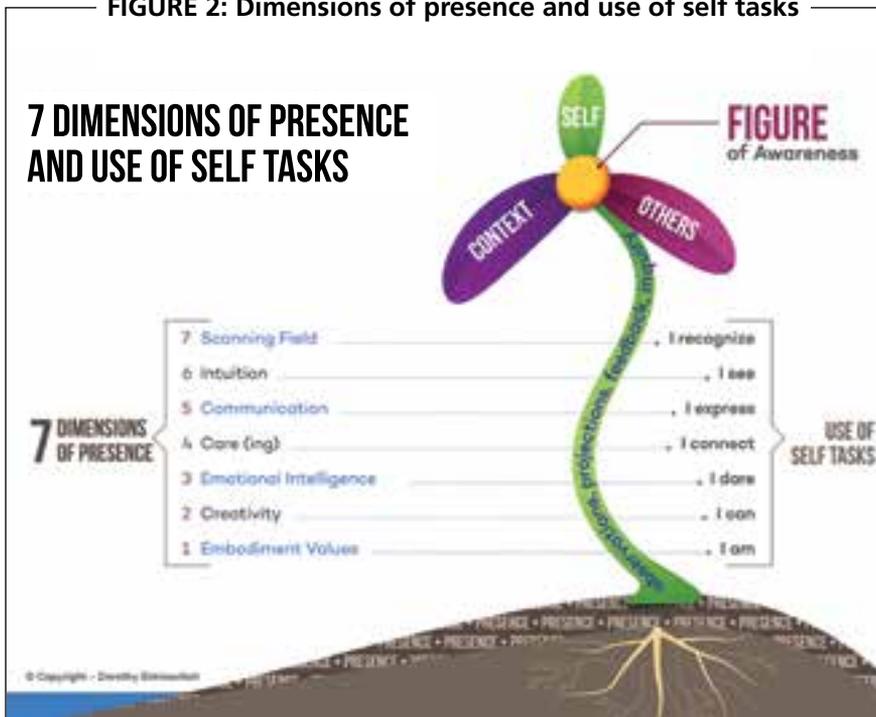


FIGURE 2: Dimensions of presence and use of self tasks



- Heightening client’s awareness of what is wanted, needed, or missing in relation to the desired figure;
- Creating interventions that are sensitive to the “safe emergency” limits of the client—if there is no emotion, there is no learning; if emotion is too high, the work will feel too risky for learning;
- Focusing interventions on the system boundary which holds the client work.

As coaches, our first challenge is to collaboratively facilitate the client’s identification of the figure that feels most compelling. Figure clarification is critical for getting a vibrant coaching agreement and to support the client to do the work that truly matters.

For example, during this coronavirus pandemic, the common figures for social exchange are diminished and are often substituted by the self-soothing activity of eating. As coaches, we could support our clients by offering an empathetic intervention, understanding that what may appear to be self-defeating behavior may be feeding a hunger for connection.

We could further support our clients with a compassionate observation that loneliness has become a compelling figure for people worldwide. In working with clients’ awareness of their social isolation, we might also access our capacity for creativity by supporting them to imagine new ways to be socially connected and engaged.

Coaching for Awareness Intelligence™ focuses on using the data revealed in the client’s behaviors, which are in plain sight but are brought into focus through the awareness of the coach. By offering feedback of observations and inquiry, the coach begins an interactive awareness raising process that serves the client’s work.

Once the client becomes aware of (makes contact with) a behavior that interferes with satisfying a crucial want or an unmet need, the change process has been activated. Clients often then report a resurgence of focus and energy.

Awareness interventions are

AWARE USE OF SELF

Coaches are instruments to support learning and change. We intentionally use our awareness to assist clients to make contact with what they want, need, or may be missing.

“Use of self as coach” is an intentional skill characterized by being present in the moment and recognizing and acting on the experiential data emerging during the coaching encounter.

Being present means showing up with our distinctive identity and being a witness for and available to respond to others. Presence is a *being* intervention, as the coach’s being will evoke a response in the client. The crucial self-awareness work of the coach is to understand the impact they evoke.

To influence or provoke an outcome that serves the client, the coach must activate presence into intentional use of self, a shift from being into *doing*.

Use of self as coach is the means by which we deliberately use our present resources (cues from our embodiment, creativity, emotional intelligence, caring, communication, intuition, and scanning) to provoke the client’s work

with a figure that is needed, wanted, or missing. The coach’s use of self ‘tasks’ are offered as interventions to support the client to act on a wanted or needed figure or to imagine what might be missing.

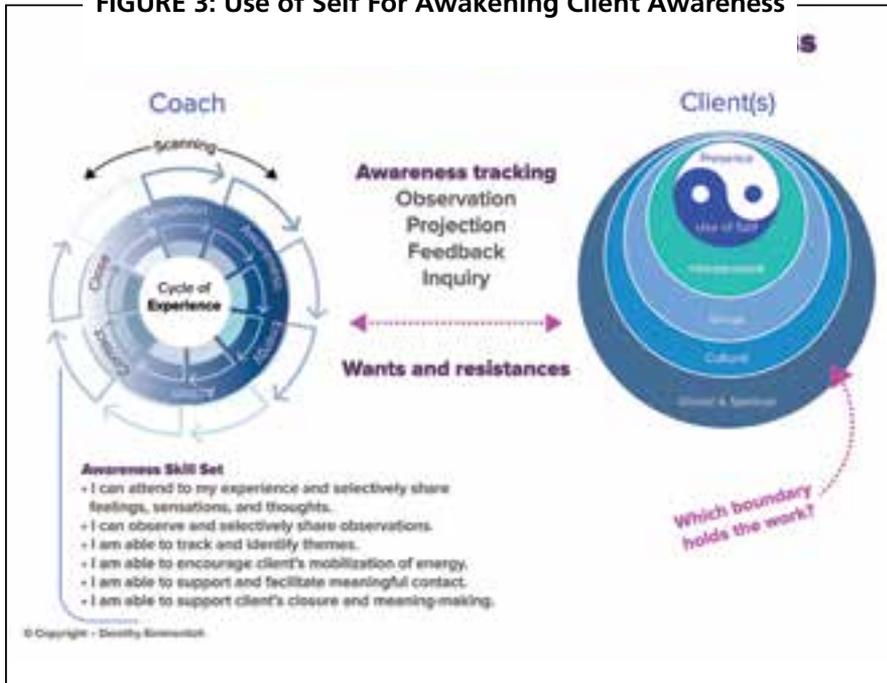
Awareness Intelligence™ is the integrative capacity to access and mobilize the dimensions of one’s coaching presence to support the client to act on their figure in ways that lead to satisfaction.

The integrative awareness tasks involved are:

- 1 Support figure clarification through COE tracking**
- 2 Collaboratively partner with the client to name the figure as the coaching agreement**
- 3 Activate use of self as coach interventions through:**

- Expressing observations and questions about client behaviors;
- Using what gets evoked in oneself to make aware projections that provoke client awareness;

FIGURE 3: Use of Self For Awakening Client Awareness



experiential and often experienced by the client as a powerful revelation of what they have ignored, disregarded, or forgotten. In this sense, working with awareness has a liberating, transformative impact that surprises both the client and the coach.

Being present in the moment and using one's Awareness Intelligence™

recalls a fundamental wisdom of Gestalt, to “trust the process.”

When coaches honor even the smallest, most ordinary moments of awareness with recognition and curiosity, extraordinary opportunities for learning and change are unleashed for our clients. •

REFERENCES:

Beisser, A. (1970). "The paradoxical theory of change." In J. Fagen & I. Shepherd (Eds.), *Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, techniques, applications*. Science and Behavior Books.

Blake, A. (2018). *Your Body is Your Brain: Leverage your somatic intelligence to find purpose, build resilience, deepen relationships and lead more powerfully*. Trokay Press.

Boyatzis, R. E. (2011). "Managerial and leadership competencies: A behavioral approach to emotional, social and cognitive intelligence." *Vision*, 15(2).

Petrie, N. (2014). "Vertical development leadership: Part I: Developing leaders for a complex world." <http://insights.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/VerticalLeadersPart1.pdf>

Rubin, C. (2020, August 8). "Don't be ashamed of those extra pounds." <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/08/at-home/coronavirus-weight-gain.html>

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. (2020), Search Inside Yourself program impact report. <https://siyli.org/downloads/SIY-Impact-Report-2020.pdf>

Siminovitch, D.E. (2017). *A Gestalt Coaching Primer: The path toward awareness IQ*. Self-published, CreateSpace.

Woudstra, G. (2017, December). How to BE a team coach. *International Coaching News*, 19, 52-53. <https://www.international-coaching-news.net>

Coaching Toys Store

COACHING TOYS

Creative Toys & Tools

For Transformational Results and Unforgettable Experiences

For

Workshops

Training

Group Process

Team Building Events

Retreats

1:1 Client Work

Personal Development

www.coachingtoysstore.com